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LETTER

FROM A

COUNTRY GENTLEMAN,

TO THE

AUTHOR

OF THE

OCCASIONAL WRITER.

*Fuit instalis quædam Cæ-
Conditione super communis.*

Hor.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. ROBERTS, near the Oxford-
Arms, in Warwick-Lane.
M. DC. XXVII.

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COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE

TO THE

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OCCASIONAL WRITER

BY

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EDITOR

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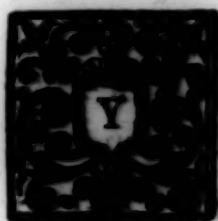


A
LETTER

FROM A

Country GENTLEMAN, &c.

S I R,



YOURS have been sent me into the Country: I have read them with the Attention they merit; and though I may differ from you in some things, I shall, I believe, readily agree with you in others; For Instance, I think a quiet, easy Behaviour, and a grateful Temper, are the indispensable Duty, and should be the Choice of every Man: You, 'tis probable,

do not think so; but then I join with you in your Opinion, That you are a fine Writer, are a Master of Stile, and have a genteel Turn for Satyr.

Nay, I cannot but express my Obligations to you, for confirming me in a Notion, I have for some time entertain'd, *viz.* That *Satyr* is no less difficult a Task than *Panegyrick*: I know it is repugnant to the Maxims of all our Authors, and the received Opinion of Mankind; they say, Nothing is easier, than to put a Man out of Countenance by abusing him; Nothing more difficult than to praise him without it: 'Tis true, but Abuse is not always Satyr; Satyr at last should have the Distinction from Scandal it deserves. *This* is a low, a despicable Vice, *That* a bold, a generous Virtue: Its Talent is to shew us the Deformity of our Vices, without exposing the Possessors of them for Monsters. It should prick us, but not stab us to the Heart; 'tis no less difficult, because it requires as much Delicacy; without it, it always loses its Poignancy, for what is gross will ever give a Distaste,

a Distaste, and even the Admirers of *Juvenal*, I fancy, will own, that in some Places he corrupts more than he corrects: Wit too, whatever Men may think, is requisite. Ill-Nature will not supply its Place; for by over-charging a Piece with this, we often burst it, and make it recoil on ourselves.

The Qualifications of a *Satyrift* are so great, that scarce an Age produces a tolerable one; the Qualities of a *Libeller* are so infamous, that one would wonder a Thousand Ages should produce one. The *Satyrift* points his Wit at general Follies or Vices; the *Libeller* discharges his Venom at particular Persons; the *Satyrift* writes on a Principle of Honesty and Concern for Mankind; the *Libeller* from the Dictates of Spleen, and a general Malevolence: The first is a publick Benefit, the last a universal Mischief. But the first of your Papers, and Monsieur de *Palm's* Memorial, much better illustrate the Distinction I would make. In the *Occasional Writer*, we may see the finest Strokes of Humour, with an equal Mixture of

of Wit and Decency : In the Memorial, such Scurrility as could not be offer'd to a common Man, without the Imputation of Impudence ; such Scurrility as fires the Breast of every honest *Briton* with Resentment, for the unparallel'd Offence it offers to *Majesty* : I say, Sir, I see this Distinction, though there are many who will not allow it ; They can discern, they tell us, the same Spirit in both, and such a Resemblance, as brings them under the Suspicion of being very near akin.

Nay, shall I be candid ? There is a Whisper prevailing even among us, that some eminent *Patriots* have been industrious in spreading Copies of the Memorial : I own, I hope not ; I should be sorry if there is one Man in *Great Britain*, who could stoop so low as to be the Tool of a foreign Power, in offering such an Indignity to his Sovereign ; if any one has, the finest Parts, the greatest Eloquence, and Popularity cannot secure him from the Contempt he deserves, nor from being rank'd among those who have defac'd the Image of our King.

But

But to return to the *Occasional Writer* :
 And here I cannot pass by one particular
 Instance of your Policy ; that is, your affixing
 a Mark of Ignominy on every one, who may
 write in Opposition to you ; your distinguish-
 ing them as *Hireling Scriblers, Tools of
 secret Service, Infamous Writers*, and such
 like. This is artful, Sir ; it may gain the
 Multitude on your Side : I applaud it as Art-
 ful, but I am afraid I cannot call it Generous ;
 'tis fighting in Security, 'tis hurting your
 Enemy before he is ready for the Attack.
 But will you give me leave to set you right
 in one Mistake ? You suppose no one an
 infamous Writer, but him, who writes for
 Pay ; you deceive your self, Sir ; a Man
 may write the Sentiments of Truth, with
 as much Sincerity, though he is rewarded
 for it, as not, and undoubtedly with no less
 Spirit : He, indeed, who prostitutes his
 Judgment, deserves the Reproach : But he
 as much deserves it, who writes to gratify
 any unwarrantable Passion ; he who in-
 dulges in it his Envy, his Discontent or
 Turbulence of Spirit. For this Reason, some
 think

think your laying down a Character in your second Paper, which you took up in your first, was a mere Joke: Those who speak as they think, and are unus'd to Disguises, will, I fear, always look on you in the *Distinction* you appear'd at first.

Whether you may like me the better for it, I cannot tell, but I think myself obliged to tell you, I am no *Hireling*; I am a *Country Gentleman*, have a Property to regard, and think my Welfare entirely dependant on the Safety of the present Establishment; wherefore I shall plainly and honestly tell you my Sentiments of you and your Undertaking. But first I cannot but assure you, I do not pretend to enter the Lists with you; I am too sensible of the Inequality; I shall not engage as a *Political Writer*; the *Government* want not any: Besides, should they, I am not very certain but you may change Sides, and I am too conscious of *your Superiority*, not to know any other must be a *Cypher* near you.

As

As I told you, Sir, I am a *Freeholder*, unbiass'd by any Affection to the Persons of any *Ministers*, as I know them not: Those who are able and honest, I esteem and honour; and while they serve the Government, I think it just they should serve themselves: This I know all Men will do; it is with this View (and it is a *fair* one, while it does not interfere with the Care of the Publick) that Men aspire to be *Managers* of our Affairs: 'Tis with this View, (and 'tis pretty demonstrable) that *many* oppose the present, because they cannot act with them.

You observe in one of your Papers, that we are grown more easy and willing to be imposed on than ever. I cannot but imagine you impose on yourself; the Nation is more sharp-sighted than you fancy, and is generally pretty well acquainted with its true Interest.

We are as jealous of any Extent of the *Prerogative*, as tender of our *Liberties*,
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and as readily alarm'd at any Dangers that threaten our Constitution, as you can wish, more perhaps than you have wished; but then we can see whether those Dangers are real or imaginary; we can see and distinguish too the *true Patriot* from the *false one*; we know the *true one* is acted by one grand Principle, *viz.* The Love of his Country. This teaches him to be resolute in Times of Peril, and easy in Times of Quiet: The *false one* we know is just the Reverse; with a hot Head, and cool Heart, he is always loudest when there is no Danger, most peaceable when there is: In publick as well as private Life there may be Errors; whether there are or not, he is still to declaim: But when we hear general Declamations, without Proofs of particular Crimes, we look on them as Clamour, and regard them as Scandal; we discern thro' his Pretences a restless Ambition, an insatiable Avarice, or implacable Malice.

When a *Cato*, who never dipp'd his Hands in Corruption, who has no *Enemies* but those of the *State*, no Passion but a
Love

Love for Justice, no other Aim but the publick Service; when he, I say, sets up for a Reformer, we admire, we revere him, because we know he is unprejudiced. But should a *Catiline*, *Cui Bella intestina, & Discordia civilis grata fuere: Animus audax, subdolanus, varius, cujuslibet rei simulator ac dissimulator, alieni appetens, sui profusus: Ardens in cupiditatibus, satis Eloquentiae, sapientiae parum: Qui quibus modis dominationem assequeretur, dum sibi regnum pararet, nequidquam pensi haberet.* Sallust. Should such a one start up, and talk of Corruption, we expect he should lay it open; should he insinuate Abuses, we require he should expose them, or we shall suspect he would introduce them: Should he inveigh against any as Deluders of the People, he must prove them so, or be thought one himself. *Hypocrisy* cannot deceive very long; and when the Mask falls off, the Patriot sinks into an *Incendiary*.

This was the Case of *Titus Manlius*; tho' I do not pretend there is the most perfect

fect Resemblance betwixt you; he was a Man of Merit, and an uncommon Bravery, so much, that his Country ow'd her Preservation to him, yet uneasy to behold a Superior, tho' that Superior was *Camillus*, he would have ruin'd that Country he had sav'd, because he could not command her. It was his Study to alienate the Minds of the Populace, his Business to infuse Jealousies and Distrusts, and slacken the Zeal of the most devoted to the Publick: For this End, he courted the lowest of the People; their Hardships, and the Oppression of the Senate, were his constant Themes. You must remember his Fate: That brave, that honest Republick despis'd his Reproaches as they saw his Ambition: They would not sacrifice *Camillus* to him, because he had deserv'd better of his Country; and this Man, who might have been the Darling, the Ornament of *Rome*, fell a Sacrifice to his own Envy and Pride; nor could his former Success secure him from the Ignominy of a *Publick Disturber* of a settled State.

I can-

I cannot see, Sir, but your Endeavours will be as ineffectual; you may toll the Alarm Bell, as you say you will, if you please; nay, you may raise and ring it in the Ears of your *Countrymen*, 'twill be attended to as a Sound for Sedition; and you will prove as innocent, however you may design it, as a common Bell-Man of the Night; Men will enjoy their Rest, because they'll know they can do it securely.

You see, Sir, we are not so willing to be impos'd on; we are not easily to be drawn into the Delusions of *Popularity*; we observe the Tendency of your Writings; we know nothing could prevail on your Modesty, to attack the Administration, but an Uneasiness that you are out of Power; we know you have abus'd that Power, whenever you have had it; we can foresee the Consequences of your having it again. Will you have them told you, Sir? But, perhaps, 'twill make you blush: We are sure, our *present Ministers* are hearty for the present Establishment; we very much
doubt

doubt whether you are so or no ; nay, or whether you can be so for any : We are sensible, their ample Fortunes must make it their Interest, to consult the Ease and Welfare of the *State* ; those who have most to lose, are certainly most to be trusted : We are certain the present Gentlemen act upon some Principles ; we are very well acquainted with your having always made a Jest of them : You'll excuse my saying this, for you must observe, there was no avoiding it.

We think *OEconomy* as necessary in the *State* as in our *private Affairs* ; and hold it as a Maxim, that a Change in our *Ministry* is always a new Charge to us : We ought then to be sure, that a Change would prove for the better, before we are desirous of such a Change ; and, perhaps, you may find it a little difficult to prove it to us. We know they have no need to run those Risques which a Set of hungry Ministers would do ; and, pardon me, Sir, we know if you could prevail (which I own I do not see any Appearance of) we must

must have not only a Set of *hungry*, but *devouring Ones* too.

You'll tell me I am all this Time playing the Part of the Libeller ; No, Sir, I write to the Character you appeared in at first : You'll say, I ought not, because 'twas a feigned one : You wrong your Abilities, when you think you do not act any to the Life you undertake ; and this once however you are consistent with yourself.

You see, Sir, I have been very open and just in my Sentiments of you : Will you indulge me two or three Words on your Performance ? I think your first, as I told you, a smart Piece of Satyr, with an equal Mixture of *Wit* and *good Nature* ; however, your second is something more entertaining, because you shew us some Thought and Reading in it : Your summary Account of the Conduct and Errors of our past Reigns from *Henry VIII.* is very just : But then you perplex us a little ; for if my honest Country Neighbours and I understand you right, you are for preserving a *Balance*

lance of Power in Europe ; and you are not. You say, The Foundations of the Grandeur of France, and those of the House of Austria, were laid very near at the same Period ; which you are very right in : You afterwards say, The forming two such Powers in Europe, made it the Interest of all other Princes and States, to keep as much as possible a Ballance between them : And here began that Principle of English Policy, which you acknowledge to be true and wise in itself, though it has not always been truly and wisely pursued. Again, Whenever this Ballance is in real Danger, by the exorbitant Growth of One Power, or by the Union of more, other Princes and States will be alarm'd of Course : All of them ought, and most of them will take Measures for their common Security. Thus far you are right. A little lower, as you observe the Errors of our last War, you say, We judg'd that the Ballance of Power could not effectually be restored, unless we wrested the whole Spanish Monarchy from the House of Bourbon, to give it to the House of Austria ; for this Prize we fought, and fought with as little

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*Regard to all other Interests, as if we had defended our own Altars and our own Houses. — We were hastening apace to make the Emperor too great and too formidable ; and should at last have found in him the Enemy we then dreaded only in another, had not the Peace prevented. How would he have been too formidable ? By the Addition of the Crown of Spain : Is not then, Sir, the Alliance of the Crown of Spain, the Union we ought to be alarm'd at of course ? especially when we know that Union is form'd almost purposely for making the Emperor greater still, by wresting one of the most valuable Branches of our Trade from us, by making *Flanders* once more the great Mart of the World ; and for making us weaker, by depriving us of our Key to the *Mediterranean, Gibraltar* ?*

Is not the *Ballance*, this *Ballance* you think should be preserv'd, in real Danger here ? Yet you say, *It is manifest, that the Notion of preserving a Ballance of Power in Europe, has prov'd an Ignis Fatuus to us, in the Pursuit of which we have been led from Difficulty to Difficulty, and from*

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Danger to Danger. If this Notion is an *Ignis Fatuus* ; if it proves a false deceitful Light to us, we ought not to pursue it at all ; and if we ought not, 'tis not a Principle of Policy, wise and just in itself, to think of maintaining it.

This seems, Sir, to us in the Country, a small Absurdity, and an odd Method to remove those Delusions, which, you say, Men of the best Sense are fallen into.

We agree with what you say at first, That the House of *Bourbon*, and the House of *Austria* are the two great Powers we are to keep up a Ballance between, and that it has been the true Interest of *Great-Britain*, for some Time past, to oppose that of *France*, because she was rising in her Power, 'till we gave a Check to it ; but if the other House, that of *Austria*, whom you say we have made great enough already, extends her Views, Views manifestly destructive to us (abstracting the Design of imposing a Tool on us) must we still continue in the same Sentiments ? Must we not direct our Opposition where the Danger most lies ? We either do not understand what a *Ballance* means, or, if we do, we think it an unusual Way of keeping it even,
by

by throwing more into that Scale, which may be heavy enough already.

This, Sir, I think, is the Substance of that elaborate Tract, your second Paper: Allow me now two or three Words on your last, and I'll finish this Trouble to you. And here give me Leave to admire your extensive Understanding; You have hitherto appear'd the *Wit*, and the *Politician*: Now you rise into the *Hero*, and *Philosopher*; and, upon my Word, you shine with equal Lustre in each *Capacity*; Your Resolution to stand unmov'd the Censures and Reproaches of the World, is great; but 'twill be greater still to correct yourself by them, 'twill be the most effectual, perhaps the only Way you can take to discredit them.

The three *Engagements* you make afterwards, are highly grateful to all your Readers; we are pleas'd to see *such* a *Man* rise up to chastise *Vice*, expose *Folly*, and combat *Error*; for every one is not fit for such an Undertaking: *Some* have liv'd in such a constant Habit of some particular *Vices* and *Follies*, that 'tis not impossible, but they may have forgot to distinguish them as such.

Your Promise, that you'll preserve *Decency* and *good Manners*, is worthy Yourself: 'tis the Height of Prudence too; for all Mankind are not such just Observers of the *Lex Talionis*, as a People of *Libya* were, who were so nicely scrupulous, that when they caught a *Louse* or *Flea* biting them, would only bite him again, and let him go.

You assure us, You will never touch upon any unalterable Defects in *Figure*, in *Family*, in *Birth*, in any kind whatever; much less will You allow Yourself to hint at any particular *Scandal*, or even mention any real *Misfortune*. *He who writes an Invektive does a silly thing, because he loses his End; and the wisest of Men has said, He that uttereth Slander, is a Fool: Not only a silly Thing; but a base and wicked one; because his Design is to disturb the Quiet and destroy the Peace of another; but not to reform or to serve the Publick: He, you say, who writes with Malice against the Man, not against his Crimes, his Follies, or his Errors, seldom proves any thing more than his own Envy, and the other's Superiority* Really, Sir, You seem to have brought in this last Observation (though 'tis very just, as well as the others; you seem to have brought it in, I say) only to account for
your

your pointing out a *particular Person*, but *two Leaves* after : This is such an Instance of *Honesty, Modesty, and Sincerity*, as I have not often seen : Your Reflections above are excellent ; but such a sudden Opposition to them, gives us little Hopes of your strict Adherence to your other Engagements, which are *Disinterestedness* and *Impartiality* ; for these we must take your Word, or form some *Rule*, by which we may judge of them ; *Reason* points out one, and the Observance of your first *Engagement*, is this *Rule* we may judge by : He who is disinterested, writes for the *Publick*, because the Publick Good is his Aim : He discovers no Personal Pique or Resentment, his Malice does not directly inveigh against any one, nor lurk under any Ironical Commendations : Where there are Errors he proposes Remedies ; and when he gives any Counsel, he gives it with an Assurance, which a *false Virtue* cannot imitate.

Your last *Engagement* I think is *Impartiality*, a very necessary, but very difficult Virtue to practise, when a Man is known for a Slave to Passions and Prejudices ; when he acts by Nature what *Guido* and *Caravaggio* did by Instruction ; when he outrages al-
most

most every Thing he represents ; especially when he thinks himself obliged to enter with Warmth into a Contest, and knows that Warmth begets Warmth, he ought to have the strictest Watch on himself ; the least Deviation from Justice brings his *Impartiality* in Question ; but when he points his Arrows all one Way, and, in a manner, avows himself an Enemy ; when he tells another, he will pursue his Destruction, he will attend him thro' every Stage of his Fortune, that he shall feel the Effects of his Zeal, as long as he draws vital Air ; 'tis somewhat surprizing he can pretend to the *Impartiality* of a *Censor*, a *Reformer of Mankind* : The solemn Profession of such Virtues may serve his Turn for a little while ; for as *Philip of Macedon* said, Children are to be amused with Play-things, Men with Oaths ; but the Discerning are not long imposed on, and that *Hypocrisy* which may be of Service to him for some Time, when discovered, proves his Ruin.

You tell us, in this licentious Age, nothing is held sacred ; that under the specious Pretence of Free-thinking, the Providence and very Being of a God have been openly called in Question ; and under the like specious Pretences, Reflections are
made

made on the Administration : You either mean something by this, or you do not ; if You mean any Thing, it is, that we are not to regard the specious Pretences of Men, and that disputing the Being of a God, and Endeavours to disturb a Government, are both Proofs of Licentiousness : They are so, tho' in different Degrees, but I should be sorry for *Your* sake, if we must look for the first among *those who* are guilty of the last.

You conclude with observing, that in the *Athenian* Government, the Citizen, who took no Side, was deem'd indifferent to the Publick Good : But this was in a Civil War, and then, 'tis true, Indolence is undoubtedly a Crime, one of the greatest : But would You, Sir, insinuate from this, that we are in such a Juncture, that Quiet must be look'd on as deserting the Common-wealth ? Are we reduc'd to such a Crisis, that the Man who will not enter with Violence into a Party, must be branded for an infamous Neutrality ? Is this the Way to lay our Divisions asleep ? This is tolling the Alarm-Bell indeed, 'tis telling the Nation they must engage on one Side or other, those who do not, will be Deserters, if not Betrayers of their Country :
This

This is really speaking plain enough; But the Work is done to your Hands. If we are to regard our Parliament, our City, our Universities, our Clergy, and almost all our Corporations of Great-Britain, we are on one Side, and are likely to continue so, notwithstanding the vigorous Efforts of the *Memorial*, and *Occasional Writer*.

Now, Sir, You may go on if You please; You may write in the greatest Tranquility and Sedateness, or with the greatest Warmth, for You promise both. We think an Offer of our Understanding too great a Compliment, and are not so very willing to be impos'd on as You suppose, and seem to wish; tho' if we were, I should do that Justice to *Your* Abilities and Endeavours, that were I a *Timon*, disgusted with Mankind, and in particular with my Country, I should say as he did, I love *Alcibiades*, because I know no Man so fit as *Alcibiades* to set *Athens* in a Flame.

I am, S. I. R.

Your Very Humble Servant,

W. A. W.

PUBLICOLA.

F I N I S.

